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FROM USMISSION UNESCO

STATE FOR IO/T JANE COWLEY, OES BARRIE RIPIN, OES/STAS
ANDREW W. REYNOLDS
STATE FOR NSC GENE WHITNEY
STATE FOR NSF INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: USUNESCO: NORDIC STATES AND UK CHAMPION
RESOLUTION TO FORMALLY "REVIEW" NATURAL SCIENCE AND
SOCIAL SCIENCE SECTORS -- WITH AN EYE TO MERGER?

1. Guidance Request in Para 3.

2. Summary: In Advance of UNESCO's October General Conference, the Nordic States and the UK are circulating a draft resolution calling for an "overall review" of Programs II and III (the Natural Sciences Sector and the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS)). The review would be undertaken by a regionally representative panel of scientific experts from member states, including appropriate intergovernmental and international NGOs, working in partnership with the Secretariat. Its goal would be to ensure that "UNESCO takes a more forward-looking perspective" in setting priorities particularly with regard "to the international goals set.(in) the Millennium Declaration." It would also help define UNESCO's role in the sciences within the UN System. (Text of Draft Resolution in Para 8).

3. Representatives of the UK and Swedish Delegations stress that the goal of the review is not to provide justification for a merger of the Natural Sciences Sector and the Social and Human Sciences (SHS) Sector. They both say, though, that they would support such a merger, and that this issue merits debate. Comment: An "overall review" of the Natural Sciences Sector could in fact represent a great opportunity for the sector. However, the idea of a joint audit with the Social Sciences Sector gives us pause. Focus on the Natural Sciences and SHS sectors alone would limit the examination of potential cross-sector synergies to those between the two sectors, in effect prejudicing the outcome of the assessment. A merger of the two sectors would result in a muddying of the goals of the Natural Sciences Sector, rather than a sharpening of its focus. This is particularly true given the current stress of the Social and Human Sciences Sector on issues including Human Rights. In light of these concerns, Post Requests Department Guidance regarding amendments to the proposed resolution. Department should also consider U.S. participation in the assessment. End summary and comment.

Swedish Delegation: Nordics Press for An "Open" Audit to Help Sectors Assume "Comparative Advantage"

4. Science Officer spoke with Mr. Falk, the deputy at the Swedish Delegation (protect), who confided that the draft resolution, sponsored by the Nordic states and the UK, was the brainchild of the National Commissions of these countries. Queried on whether the aim of the resolution is to merge the natural sciences and social sciences sectors, Falk replied that the assessment is meant to be "open." That said, Falk himself believes that the two sectors should be merged; he was not sure whether the Swedish National Commission shared this view. Science Officer asked why the Natural Sciences and Social Sciences Sector were chosen as the targets, rather than education and/or culture. Quoting from the DR, Falk said the proposal was meant to enable the Natural Sciences Sector and the Social Sciences Sector to profit from their comparative advantage, stressing that the study could inform the next budget exercise. At any rate, the performance of the Education Sector is already the subject of debate at the Executive Board; UNESCO's role in culture is clearly defined. Natural Sciences and Social Sciences were chosen together in order to foster cross-sector approaches. For example, water is the principal priority in UNESCO; but there are many social factors that need to be considered in this area.

5. Science Officer explored similar issues with the UK DCM Christine Atkinson (protect), probing her on the ultimate goals of the resolution. She said that the National Committees of the co-sponsoring states had been studying for nearly a year means of "rationalizing" UNESCO's sectors. She expressed the personal belief that

the two sectors should be merged, but stressed that the goal of the evaluation is not to provide justification for a merger. The study would address this question, among others.

16. Science officer expressed the concern that the resolution seems to have two goals: the first to ensure that UNESCO science assumes a lead role in helping countries address development challenges; the second to explore the interface between the Natural Sciences Sector and the Social Science Sector. Might these two disparate goals produce a muddy result, for example in giving short shrift to potential synergies with other sectors? Atkinson pointed out that the issue of merger of the two sectors is worthy of study: it would allow UNESCO to eliminate an ADG position. Science ethics, currently a division of the SHS sector, would be easily integrated into the work of the current Natural Sciences sector. Human rights issues currently covered in the Social and Human Sciences Sector are not a natural fit, she conceded. But the important thing is that the individual program officers work towards clear objectives set for them by member states. Atkinson concluded by again stressing that member states should debate these issues, and that the assessment would be a basis for this discussion.

Science Sector Concerned about "True Aim" of Resolution:
A Merger with Social Sciences?

17. Science Officer met with a Natural Sciences Sector Director who expressed concern about the draft resolution, although he had not seen the text; the Natural Sciences sector is understandably abuzz. Issues of concern to them are: What sparked this proposal? do member states "disapprove" of the science sector? Is the goal of the audit in fact to build a case to merge the two divisions? Nalecz noted that under current leadership, the focus of SHS is on human rights, although the office that deals with ethics that cooperates well with the science sector. 3. How will the assessment be paid for? (NOTE: The figure in the proposed current DR is 400,000 USD, to be paid from funds that would have gone to finance SHS's "UNESCO World Report." End Note.

18. Begin text of proposed Draft Amendment to Programme and Budget: Para 3120 delete "and through the dissemination of the UNESCO World Report": to be replaced by the following addition: "and through a thorough review of Major Programmes II and III by a team of expert representatives of the scientific community from Member States, inclusive of all regions, and appropriate intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations, working in close partnership with the Secretariat."

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The General Conference decides to launch an overall review of Major Programmes II and III against the background of UNESCO's mandate and today's global needs.

There is increasing realization in developed and developing countries alike that the Sciences - including engineering and technology - have an essential role for UNESCO in the fight against poverty and improving the human condition.

The Natural Sciences are at the heart of knowledge-based capacity building for sustainable development, of understanding key issues of the environment for risk preparedness and disaster mitigation, of conflict resolution and prevention, and of the fight against disease, with the Social and Human Sciences inseparably providing the underlying ethical, social, and cultural context.

But science is fundamentally progressive. The strategic direction of science for pursuit of these goals may come to acquire so much complexity that the resolution of problems will imply the production of new forms of knowledge and action.

With its unique mandate for science in the framework of the United Nations System, it is critical therefore that UNESCO take a more forward-looking perspective on prioritization and promote a progressive agenda giving proper emphasis to emerging priorities.

Furthermore, UNESCO should better exploit its comparative advantage, seeking complementarity, harmonization and coordination with its sister organizations of the United Nations system, other scientific bodies and national governments. A real demarcation must be agreed between different organizations.

The review shall assess the relevance and strengths of the Sciences programmes in relation to current priorities as expressed and with regard to the international goals set, in particular the Millennium Declaration and the Related Millennium Development Goals. Building on this review, the need for reform and adjustments of the Major Programmes II and III should be examined with the purpose of ensuring that UNESCO's role as custodian of knowledge is well defined and reaffirmed at the present time. The review should include an assessment of UNESCO's role in the global science community and a consideration of division of labor and tasks in relation to other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as reflect on the interface between Social and Human Sciences and Natural Sciences.

The General Conference:

Instructs the Director General to initiate a review with mandate on the lines indicated above by setting up a team of expert representatives of the scientific community from member states, inclusive of all regions, and appropriate intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations, working in close partnership with the Secretariat. The team shall start its work by 1 December 2005 at the latest; and

Further instructs the Director General to present the review, with the recommendations of the Executive Board, to the 34th Session of the General Conference with a view to integrating the agreed conclusions in the Program and Budget (34 C/5) and the Medium-Term Strategy (34 C/4).

Budgetary implications: 400 000 USD

Source of Funding 03123 Main Line of Action 3: UNESCO World Report

Explanatory Note: The review should bear in kind that the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals and the rising demands for United Nations system-wide coordination including the United Nations' agenda of simplification, harmonization and quality enhancement. There is an obvious need to clarify roles, tasks and programme delivery responsibilities as well as the need to prioritize between and among them.

The essential role of science as a foundation for sustainable development and for the fight against poverty has been acknowledged at many recent international fora, not least at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg). At the same time, with the ever-increasing intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, funds and programs involved in providing assistance in the pursuit of goals, it is crucial to look into the role of UNESCO as the UN organization with an overriding mandate in the fields of science.

An overall impact evaluation of UNESCO's Sciences Programme will be helpful in clarifying roles and responsibilities, and specifically that of UNESCO, with a view to achieving the goals set. A review addressing the division of labor will ultimately strengthen UNESCO's mandate in the fields concerned. End text of proposed Draft Amendment to Programme and Budget.

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